

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide

One Night

National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
Shenandoah National Park
Emergency: 1-800-732-0911



Nicholson Hollow

Standard - Roundtrip

Level: Beginner

Total Length: 4 to 14 miles

Trip Description: Wilderness area, cascades, park history, and swimming holes; park at Old Rag boundary.

Entry: Nicholson Hollow Boundary

Exit: Nicholson Hollow Boundary

Map(s): PATC #10 Central District

Central District; East side; Route 600 - Nethers

Central District; East side; Route 600 - Nethers

Day One

Campsite: Nicholson Hollow Trail - backcountry

2 to 3 miles

Hike from parking area to Nicholson Hollow trailhead, up to 0.6 mile.

Hike up Nicholson Hollow Trail 1.4 miles and look for a place to camp in the next mile.

Groups will find enough room to camp legally by looking for sites away from Nicholson Hollow Trail between the junctions with Corbin Mountain and Hot Mountain-Short Mountain Trails.

Day Two

2 to 3 miles

Return the way you came, hiking back down Nicholson Hollow trail 1.4 to 2.4 miles.

Return to Old Rag parking, up to 0.6 mile.

Notes

The Hughes River, which runs through Nicholson Hollow, can run very high in the spring or after heavy rains (knee to waist high). The trail crosses the river, so be prepared. The plus side is the excellent swimming holes that exist even in drought.

While this is a popular, though not crowded, place on the weekends, during the week you can often have this wilderness area to yourself.

Options

Option for a strenuous day-hike circuit (6.4 miles), then hiking out with gear (2-3 miles):
8.4 miles

Leave most of your gear, taking essential gear and valuables in day packs. The Hazel wilderness can be very confusing, so be sure to bring a map! If you don't bring all of your food and scented items, you must properly secure these items from wildlife.

Hike down Nicholson Hollow Trail to Hot-Short Mountain Trail (0 to 1 mile).

Hike up Hot-Short Mountain Trail 2.1 miles.

Bear left onto Hazel Mountain Trail and hike 0.5 mile.

Turn left onto Catlett Mountain Trail and hike 1.1 miles.

Turn left onto Catlett Spur Trail and hike 200 feet.

Turn left onto Hannah Run Trail and hike 2.5 miles.

Turn left onto Nicholson Hollow Trail and hike out 1.9 miles.

(Pick up your gear if you left it earlier. If you left it above Hannah Run, this could add mileage.)

Continue to Old Rag parking, up to 0.6 mile.